

We claim:

1. A minor-end loading carton comprising:

a first pair of opposing panels;

a second pair of opposing panels connecting the first pair of panels to form a substantially rectangular hollow body having a pair of opposing minor ends, each of the panels being larger than the opposing minor ends;

a first flap foldably attached to a first one of the panels at a first one of the minor ends, the first flap being foldable between an open position and a closed position substantially perpendicular to the first panel;

a second flap having a slot formed therein foldably attached to a second one of the panels at the first minor end, the second flap being foldable between an open position and a closed position substantially perpendicular to the second panel;

a third flap having a slot formed therein foldably attached to a third one of the panels at the first minor end opposing the second flap, the third flap being foldable between an open position and a closed position substantially perpendicular to the third panel; and

a fourth flap attached to a fourth one of the panels at the first minor end, the fourth flap being foldable between an open position and a closed position substantially perpendicular to the fourth panel, the fourth flap having a first tab for engaging the slot of the second flap and a second tab for engaging the slot of the third flap;

wherein, the second flap and the third flap each at least partially overlap the first flap in a closed configuration and are detached from the first flap in the closed configuration, and the fourth flap tabs engage respective slots of the second and third flaps in the closed configuration.

2. The minor-end loading carton of claim 1, wherein a distal portion of the second flap overlaps a distal portion of the opposing third flap in the closed configuration.

3. The minor-end loading carton of claim 1, wherein the second flap and the third flap at least partially overlap the first flap on the same side of the first flap in the closed configuration.

4. The minor-end loading carton of claim 1, wherein the second flap and the third flap at least partially overlap the first flap on opposite sides of the first flap in the closed configuration.

5. The minor-end loading carton of claim 1, wherein the tabs of the fourth flap each include a tab hook engaging an edge of a respective one of the slots of the second and third flaps in the closed configuration.

6. The minor-end loading carton of claim 6, wherein the tabs of the fourth flap are foldable with respect to the fourth flap for assisting engagement with the slots of the second and third flaps.

7. The minor-end loading carton of claim 6, wherein a distal portion of the fourth flap includes a pair of forward hooks, each one of the forward hooks engaging an edge of a respective one of the slots of the second and third flaps in the closed configuration.

8. The minor-end loading carton of claim 1, wherein the fourth flap includes a fold line assisting engagement with the slots of the second and third flaps.

9. The minor-end loading carton of claim 1 further comprising:
a fifth flap foldably attached to one of the panels at a second one of the minor ends having a first slot and a second slot formed therein;
a sixth flap foldably attached to one of the panels at the second minor end having a first slot and a second slot formed therein, the sixth flap substantially opposing the fifth flap;
a seventh flap foldably attached to one of the panels at the second minor end having a pair of tabs engaging the first slots of the fifth and sixth flaps in a closed configuration; and
an eighth flap foldably attached to one of the panels at the second minor end and opposing the seventh flap, the eighth flap having a pair of tabs engaging the second slots of the fifth and sixth flaps in the closed configuration.

10. The minor-end loading carton of claim 9, wherein the first and second slots of the fifth and sixth flaps are substantially L-shaped.

11. A stalk produce shipping carton comprising:

an elongate body formed by a top panel, a bottom panel opposing the top panel, a pair of opposing side panels connecting the top panel to the bottom panel, a first minor end formed by a first set of flaps foldably connected to a first end of the panels, and a second minor end opposing the first minor end formed by a second set of flaps foldably connected to a second end of the panels, each of the panels being larger than the opposing minor ends, the first minor end and second minor ends being openable and closable by respectively engaging and disengaging the first and second sets of flaps; and

a plurality of stalk produce having elongate stalks stored within the body, the elongate stalks being disposed parallel to the minor ends and extending from the bottom panel to the top panel.

12. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 11, wherein the first set of flaps include:

a first flap;

a second flap having a slot formed therein disposed substantially perpendicular to the first flap, the second flap at least partially overlapping the first flap in a closed configuration;

a third flap having a slot formed therein disposed substantially perpendicular to the first flap and opposing the second flap, the third flap at least partially overlapping the first flap in the closed configuration; and

a fourth flap having a first tab engaging the slot of the second flap and a second tab engaging the slot of the third flap in the closed configuration.

13. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein a distal portion of the second flap overlaps a distal portion of the third flap in the closed configuration.

14. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein the second flap and the third flap at least partially overlap the first flap on the same side of the first flap in the closed.

15. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein the second flap and the third flap at least partially overlap the first flap on opposite sides of the first flap in the closed configuration.

16. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein the fourth flap at least partially overlaps the second flap and the third flap on an outer side of the second flap and the third flap in the closed configuration.

17. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein the tabs of the fourth flap each include a tab hook engaging an edge of a respective one of the slots of the second and third flaps in the closed configuration.

18. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 17, wherein the tabs of the fourth flap are foldable with respect to the fourth flap for assisting engagement with the slots of the second and third flaps.

19. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 17, wherein a distal portion of the fourth flap includes a pair of forward hooks, each one of the forward hooks engaging an edge of a respective one of the slots of the second and third flaps in the closed configuration.

20. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein the first flap is disconnected from the second, third and fourth flaps in the closed configuration.

21. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 12, wherein the second set of flaps include:

a fifth flap having a first slot and a second slot formed therein;

a sixth flap having a first slot and a second slot formed therein, the sixth flap substantially opposing the fifth flap;

a seventh flap having a pair of tabs engaging the first slots of the fifth and sixth flaps in a closed configuration; and

an eighth flap opposing the seventh flap having a pair of tabs engaging the second slots of the fifth and sixth flaps in a closed configuration.

22. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 21, wherein the first and second slots of the fifth and sixth flaps are substantially L-shaped.

23. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 21, wherein the first set of flaps forms a carton bottom onto which the stalk produce is loaded and the second set of flaps forms an opening in an open configuration through which the stalk produce is loaded.

24. The stalk produce shipping carton of claim 11, wherein the stalk produce includes celery.

25. A method for loading and shipping stalk produce in a minor-end loading carton, the carton having a bottom panel, a top panel opposing the bottom panel, a pair of opposing side panels connecting the top and bottom panels, the panels defining opposing closable first and second minor ends, each of the panels being larger than the minor ends, the panels and minor ends defining a storage cavity, the method comprising:

closing the first minor end;

orienting the carton in a loading configuration wherein the minor ends are substantially vertically aligned with each other;

loading stalk produce downward through the second minor end into the storage cavity such that the stalks are oriented parallel to the minor ends and extend from the bottom panel to the top panel;

closing the second minor end; and

rotating the carton to place the bottom panel downward and the top panel upward, wherein the stalks are oriented substantially vertical.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein closing the first minor end comprises engaging a plurality of first flaps disposed at the first minor end into a closed configuration.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the plurality of first flaps includes a first flap, a second flap disposed perpendicular to the first flap having a locking slot formed therein, a third flap disposed perpendicular to the first flap and opposing the second flaps having a locking slot formed therein, and a fourth flap opposing the first flap having a pair of tabs, and foldably overlapping the first flaps includes in the order listed:

folding over the first flap into an orientation perpendicular to the panels;

folding over the second flap into an orientation perpendicular to the panels wherein the second flap partially overlaps the first flap;

folding over the third flap into an orientation perpendicular to the panels wherein the third flap overlaps a distal portion of the second flap and partially overlaps the first flap; and

engaging the tabs of the fourth flap into the slots of the second and third flaps while folding over the fourth flap.

28. The method of claim 25, wherein the step of closing the second minor end comprises engaging a plurality of second flaps disposed at the second minor end into a closed configuration.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein plurality of second flaps includes a pair of opposing slot flaps each foldably attached to one of the panels and each having a first and a second slot formed therein, and a pair of opposing tab flaps each foldably attached to one of the panels and disposed substantially perpendicular to the slot flaps, each tab flap having a pair of tabs for engaging slots in the slot flaps, the step of engaging a plurality of second flaps including in the order listed:

folding over the slot flaps into a closed position substantially perpendicular to the panels;

folding over a first one of the opposing tab flaps into a closed position substantially perpendicular to the panels wherein the first one of the tab flaps overlaps the slot flaps and substantially simultaneously engaging each one of the tabs into a corresponding slot of one of the slot flaps; and

folding over a first one of the opposing tab flaps into a closed position substantially perpendicular to the panels wherein the first one of the tab flaps overlaps the slot flaps and substantially simultaneously engaging each one of the tabs into a corresponding slot of one of the slot flaps.